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# LABOUR ORGANISER

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# THE LABOUR ORGANISER

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AUGUST, 1953

PRICE FIVEPENCE

## How to Finance Agencies

THE *Labour Organiser* sympathises with the Agents' Union in its endeavour to persuade the movement to review its methods of employing full-time agents. Whether or not the proposals made by Mr. Hilliard, in this issue, are the best that can be adopted is open to question, but whatever the answer they are worthy of serious consideration.

Not all Constituency Labour Parties believe that the employment of a full-time agent is necessary, or even desirable. There are 191 constituencies where the Parliamentary Candidate is sponsored and these 86 have no agent, and a considerable number of these are marginal constituencies.

The payment by Head Office of 50 per cent of the agent's salary, in the first place in non-sponsored marginal constituencies and ultimately in all non-sponsored constituencies, will not itself guarantee that an agent will be employed: some of those constituencies without agents already are in receipt of half the salary of an agent, as well as a contribution of 80 per cent of the Parliamentary election expenses, from a sponsoring union.

The proposal to finance agency appointments in non-sponsored marginal constituencies by increasing affiliation fees by 3d. a member will not be received with universal enthusiasm. The lack of enthusiasm will not be confined to trade unions. An increased affiliation fee is a matter of importance to a Constituency Labour Party with a large membership. In the case of a 4,000 membership party this would mean an additional payment of £50 a year and active workers, whose party faces such an additional liability, might question the justice of their party contributing to provide organising assistance for Constituency Labour Parties which had not built up their membership. (There are 26 parties each with a membership of 4,000 or more, but more than a quarter of the total have less than 1,000 members each.) Moreover, the proposal that Head Office shall pay 50 per cent of the salary in *non-sponsored* constituencies is hardly an encouragement to trade unions and similar bodies to sponsor candidates.

If the Agents' Union's proposals do no more than stimulate debate on this urgent question they will have served a useful purpose.

# RESERVED SEAT IS SECRET OF MEETING'S SUCCESS

says CYRIL LOVELESS

SPEAKING at a public meeting in November, Ian Mikardo, M.P., said: "When I agreed to speak in the Isle of Wight, I did not expect to find more than 50-60 people present" and, when reporting the meeting, the local press stated "400 people were present, most of them paying 6d. for a reserved seat."

At a time when it is usual to read that public meetings fail to attract people, except at a General Election, or when a 'national' speaker is present, the attendance of 400 people at a meeting is most encouraging.

It can be argued that the name of Ian Mikardo is well known, and would attract a good audience at any time. The argument would not hold good, however, in the case of another M.P., who was practically unknown, as he also attracted 400 people to a meeting in the previous April.

It must be remembered that the towns in the Isle of Wight are fairly small and that the largest, where Ian Mikardo's meeting was held, is predominantly Tory, Labour having only one member on the local council out of a total of 18 elected members.

How was it possible then, to get 400 people, in two widely differing towns to attend public meetings? It was the result of conscientious effort for three weeks before each meeting. On the morning of the meetings it was known that over 300 would be present at each: the success of the meetings was ensured beforehand.

The secret of success was in the 'reserved seat'. It is customary to reserve a number of seats for very interested people, but here the sale of reserved seats was the main means of advertising.

Members had to approach likely people to buy tickets and how well they did it can be judged from the results. The usual

advertisements were taken in the press and there was a poster display, but no handbills were delivered. The tickets were attractive and each contained a photo of the M.P. (the block was borrowed from his agent) and details of his career taken from *The Times* 'House of Commons' with details of the meeting, time, place and supporting speakers, etc.

Interest in the meeting was thus built up and a subject, used in all advertising, was introduced to assist in this. 'Why Britain Cannot Afford a Tory Government'; 'Why the Next Government will be Labour'; 'The Tory Back-to-the-Dol' Policy', etc., have been used, and apart from creating interest, the titles were sufficiently wide to allow the speakers to develop the subject of their choice in the way they desired.

Free admission was not permitted until 10 minutes before the start of the meeting, by which time all ticket holders were expected to be seated.

As admission was free, the 6d. being for the privilege of a reserved seat, it was quite permissible to take a collection, and the combined income of both meetings cleared the expenses. Had the weather been bad and prevented people from attending, the reserved seat money would have been a very welcome contribution towards the expenses and would have saved over 50 per cent of the possible loss.

If 20 members can be found to sell five tickets each, it is better than expecting five members to sell 20 each. If sufficient members are prepared to do some door-to-door work, the marked register can be brought into use and the 'doubtfuls' invited to attend the meeting. If the meeting is to be part of a membership campaign, then known supporters can be made the focal point, and if they buy tickets and attend the meeting, there should be no difficulty in getting them to complete the enrolment form. Whether there is a large active membership, or only a small one, the method can be adapted to suit local requirements.

# Give Up Soap Box For Radio

says JOHN M. SMITH

WHAT election agent would not be delighted to think that half of the electors would attend a meeting to hear Labour's case and who wouldn't take the greatest pains over such a meeting?

In fact, agents take great pains and spend a great deal of money on indoor meetings when the aggregate attendance at the whole series seldom exceeds ten per cent of the electorate.

Yet in 1951, each election broadcast drew an audience ranging from twenty to fifty per cent of the electorate and no one in the constituencies did very much about it.

Television was at that time in its infancy, but next time it will be a potent force and both these mediums will have to be integrated with other aspects of the campaign to get maximum effect.

But first attention must be given to production and it must be borne in mind that the important thing is the effect on the listeners and not the effect on the ego of some 'star' speaker. What is wanted is a series of programmes each of which will, by dramatic presentation, drive home a main point in the campaign.

In Denmark, where election broadcasts command very large audiences, our comrades have almost completely abandoned the straight talk in favour of the dramatic approach. The popularity of 'Any Questions' and other audience participation programmes is a useful pointer and many will remember the telecasts in 1951 when both parties employed visual aids.

Next, the audience must be organised. The vast majority of electors have access to a sound radio but most workers do not study the *Radio Times*. A small handbill, produced by Head Office, and distributed with the election address would be most useful.

With this information available at the beginning of the campaign, an agent could plan his indoor meetings accordingly. smaller meetings in the out of the way places could be held to coincide with our broadcasts, thus detracting as little as pos-

sible from the listening audience, or alternatively big meetings could be held on those evenings with the broadcast relayed to the audience. Head Office would have to obtain general approval for this from the B.B.C.

Television is slightly different. By the next election the whole country will probably be covered by transmitters but not all Labour supporters will have a receiver. Large screen projection will probably not be feasible but supporters who do have sets can be urged to organise viewing circles among their friends and sets could probably be rigged up in the windows of committee rooms, etc. Co-op Societies could help by using the demonstration sets in their show rooms.

There is plenty here for both Head Office and the constituencies to be getting on with but is it worth all the trouble? I believe so. By this means our leading propagandists can be seen and heard in every constituency and the campaign can be kept up in outlying villages which the candidate cannot visit more than once. In many places the number of indoor meetings can be cut down to the advantage of other activities.

The soap box has given way to the modern magic box. We must learn to master its tricks.

There is much in what Mr. Smith says in this thoughtful article, but there are difficulties concerning B.B.C. copyright, as well as legal issues which will have to be cleared up before agents can be advised to put Mr. Smith's ideas into practice at a Parliamentary Election.

—EDITOR.

## REGIONAL WOMAN ORGANISERS

West Midlands and Eastern Regions

Applications are invited for two posts—Regional Woman Organiser for the West Midlands Region, and Regional Woman Organiser for the Eastern Region. The Woman Organiser is responsible for the organisation of women and the supervision of the work of Women's Sections and Advisory Councils within her region. Application forms and information as to conditions of appointment from the Chief Woman Officer, Labour Party, Transport House, Smith Square, S.W.1, to whom application forms must be returned by 20th August.

# THERE ARE NO RULES FOR L.V.O.

By JOHN TAYLOR, M.P.

AUGUST is, I hope, an inappropriate time to be reminded of the ancient story of the village worthy's activities on a bitterly cold morning when a savage mid-winter Nor-easter seemed to freeze the marrow of the bones.

Promising comfort and warmth to sundry local tradesmen, he persuaded the milkman to contribute a bottle of milk, the grocer to subscribe four eggs and the publican to weigh in with noggins of rum and the use of his stove.

While the four were gratefully enjoying the steaming mixture he concocted from these ingredients, a thought struck the publican. "This," he said to the worthy, "is all very nice. It hits the spot. But three of us have incurred some expense to provide it. What have you done towards this pleasant interlude?" "Ah," said the worthy, "I organised it!"

## Fair Enough

Fair enough. In this case, organising ingenuity received its fitting reward. The voluntary organiser of a local or constituency party is seldom paid in such tangible coin. His payment is in imponderables. The inward pleasure at seeing others carrying out the plans he has devised in careful detail. The solid satisfaction on seeing the plans successfully concluded.

It is a comparatively straightforward matter to outline the duties of a Chairman, Secretary or Treasurer. Their responsibilities are fairly clearly defined and are much the same in every unit of the Party organisation. Thus the writer offends only about the 75 per cent or so of the Chairmen, Secretaries and Treasurers who do not work according to the book.

To endeavour to explain the duties of a voluntary organiser is a much more chancy business in which the offence-creation-prone percentage is about 99.9.

NOW Scottish Whip in the House of Commons, John Taylor was formerly Regional Organiser in Scotland, Eastern Counties Regional Organiser and Agent in several constituencies. This contribution, on the work of a local voluntary organiser, is the fourth of a series dealing with the duties of Party officers.

There are no rules. There is no book to work to.

Another snag is that there are between 200 and 300 professional organisers in the Labour Party. They have as little enthusiasm for dilution in their industry as any other trade unionist. I was one myself for a quarter of a century. My views are therefore prejudiced by the professional bias. This prompts me to declare with emphasis that, at constituency party level there is, in my opinion, no effective substitute for a full-time, professional organiser and agent.

No one else, on a constituency-wide range, can possibly have time to build up contacts and records and conduct their continuous maintenance.

But at local party, ward or village level the right appointee as local voluntary organiser can be worth his or her weight in properly marked ballot papers.

First and foremost, he (or she) should like the village worthy, be an opportunist. He should be constantly on the alert for some local circumstance which can be turned to the Party's advantage. There are no rules about that. All it needs is a ready wit and a fair knowledge of local events and personalities. Plus, of course, sufficient sense to stop flogging a dead horse or to stroke one likely to kick back.

He should supervise and maintain the marked register for his polling district, deleting those who move out or die; checking and entering those who become qualified or move in; keeping tabs on the postal voters. In this vital job he should work

in detailed co-operation with the constituency Agent or Party.

He should keep his own personal register of those Party members in his area who do specified jobs or can be persuaded to do them. Collectors, canvassers, literature distributors, polling day workers in their various sections, car owners and drivers, window-bill exhibitors, social event workers, and so on. What is more to the point, he should use this register, ensuring that the names and addresses therein become real men and women actually on the job when the need for them comes along.

These functions are sufficient, if they are really well done, to occupy all the spare time of a local honorary organiser. They are of immense value to any ward or local Party. They are really more important to the Party than any other local job. But when they are no-one's special local responsibility, they are often inadequately done or wholly neglected.

It may be that an L.V.O. is a glutton for work and insists on running the Party's local social activities too. It may be that the local Party has slave-driving tendencies and expects him to be a social as well as a political organiser. I doubt if this is wise. Social activities should be managed by a Social Secretary or a social committee.

Certainly this should be the case if the local Ward or Party has its own hall and must thus engage in regular and frequent social activities to justify the hall's existence and ownership. An L.V.O. who manages such premises will have little or no time for managing political activities. And it is political activities we are mainly concerned with.

### Regular Pattern

If there is no hall and the L.V.O. is of the all-purpose variety, he would be wise, in most cases, to confine his social events to a regular pattern of annual functions. A road or rail outing in the summer; a reunion around Christmas or New Year; something for the children and something for the veterans. If more are wanted or

needed, let him show his organising ability by establishing a local committee to do the work.

There are exceptions, but the term 'overworked organiser' should be self-contradictory.

Whilst venturing on broad generalisations, let us sum up. Here is a first-class job for the right man or woman in every small electoral unit. It requires little 'book-keeping' work. It is not a job for an introvert. It is the ideal job for the good mixer who likes people. If organising ability exists it will speedily show itself. If a person with all these qualifications exists among the local membership, appoint him organiser. Don't waste him in any other office.

About fifty per cent of the membership are good potential Chairmen. A fair proportion could acquire the qualifications of a good Secretary. Potential Organisers never want to become Treasurers and vice versa. But good local organisers are harder to come by. Once you have found one, try hard to keep him for he is a treasure beyond price.

## APPEALS CHEAPER

ON another page, the Agent for Southampton asks for details of the cost of applying to the Courts for relief from the consequences of breaches of election law.

In a recent case, an appellant had to find nearly £100 to meet the costs involved in his appeal, but costs may be much more than that, depending upon where the appeal is heard, the number of objectors, counsel employed, etc.

If no appeal is made, or if an appeal does not result in the granting of relief, then the offender is liable to proceedings which may result in incurring much heavier penalties, than the costs of an appeal.

EDITOR



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# THE CASE FOR WARD REVISION

by

T. W. VERNON

IN considering the case for altering ward boundaries, can anyone propose a more relevant consideration than one taking into account the economic and social characteristics of different areas of a town or district?

Does it not stand to reason that people mainly coming within a low-income range will have quite different aims and needs and experiences in relation to local government services than people of high income?

## ELECTORAL PATTERN

That a particular political party is principally composed of—or supported by—this or the other principal grouping of the people (i.e. into rich and poor) is not relevant. On an objective approach by a Government official, seeking to make an intelligent electoral pattern which could produce a Council broadly representative of the different major interests, would not the result segregate the economic classes?

It would not be intelligent to try to draw rectangles of equal size. The boundaries would have no relationship to principal roads nor to notable local features. The electorates within each rectangle might well differ considerably from each other.

It would be equally unintelligent to make a system of wards of almost equal electorates, because the boundaries would be difficult to determine to anyone's satisfaction, the boundaries would be erratic and, moreover, would have to be re-drawn fairly frequently if numerical equality were some holy principle never to be breached.

Without any elaborate and detailed survey of a town, any knowledgeable and honest-minded person could indicate the six, or nine, or twelve, areas having separate and distinctive character. His boundaries would follow principal roads, or railways, or a river or canal.

He would try to keep each ward of a size which the councillors elected therein

could be expected to make themselves familiar with and be able to visit in their ordinary walks and errands.

Without making a god of numerical equality, he would try to have ward electorates not unduly varied in size. He would try, too, to have wards with electorates giving an entitlement to not less than three and, say, not more than six councillors each.

This precaution as to a maximum studies the convenience of the electors, who ought not to have a multitude of names to study in the polling booths when an election is contested by two, three or even four political organisations. (In the 1949 elections in my Borough, we had one ward with 36 names on the voting paper!)

To prevent undue size, it might be necessary (and quite unobjectionable) to divide a socially homogeneous area into two wards. What ought to be avoided, in order to limit size, is to cut off some area which (socially speaking) is a genuine part of a distinct ward and attach it to a very different kind of area where its inhabitants would be a permanent minority.

When all such considerations as these have been met, then a little regard might be paid to convenience of polling places. But no undue sacrifice ought ever to be made on this score. It is the business of the Returning Officer (the Town Clerk) to discover or improvise polling places; a proper ward system ought not to be distorted to make his job easier! In this connection, it might be remembered that any one polling place can be used by voters in adjoining ward(s).

## IMMINENT CHANGES

There is one consideration to be borne in mind that has not yet been mentioned. A ward re-organisation must pay regard to any known and fairly imminent changes, such as a considerable slum clearance, a new housing scheme or a new road or railway. Such developments will affect, possibly, the character of an area and the size of the electorate.

My own local experience has shown that a good knowledge of local history and

development over, say, the past 150 years is invaluable. It is as well to be able to show that the original ward boundaries reflected correctly the social and economic factors ruling at the date they were drawn; and to emphasise the principles upon which they were evidently based. Then, the historical changes can be described and the case for ward alterations reflecting such changes becomes almost self-evident.

It is, further, of greatest importance that main spokesmen should be intimately informed on the location and character of all roads and places within each ward under discussion. They should be fully informed, too, on all future housing developments, etc.

### SCHOOLS AND SHOPS

Spokesmen should know where people shop, where the primary schools are, where people go for recreation. All this knowledge helps to formulate the distinctiveness of a particular area and to expose the wrongness of a ward boundary (actual or proposed) cutting across such an area.

It is always important to keep in mind that, though wards appear to be only geographical divisions, the subject is actually one of grouping electors, that is to say, *families*, into electoral areas which take cognisance of interests, occupations and standards of life common to a majority. Then, a case can be built up which is so pregnant with uncontested *human* evidence as to be unanswerable. But care must be taken to avoid any proposal which is based only on party calculations; if not, what is being done will be fairly apparent to the Inspector himself and he will be suspicious of all other proposals in consequence. The case must be one that would satisfy an objective mind, provided the principles underlying any system of wards are accepted.

The principles I have explained are ones derived from historical practice and modern precedents. These must be established as being fair to all sides. The references to 'rich and poor' must be handled tactfully, since the opposition is capable of asserting that a class war is being advocated!

The division between rich and poor is not one created by the petitioners to the Home Secretary. It is a social fact which has always existed and has vital relevance to the democratic conduct of representative local government. Furthermore, recog-

nition of that fact in fixing ward boundaries is based on a principle introduced by the wealthy class and not by the spokesmen of the working masses.

(Concluded)

In order to avoid any misunderstanding, it should be pointed out that Mr. Vernon refers to the procedure in London, which is governed by the London Government Act of 1939. The Local Government Act, 1933, operates for the rest of England and Wales and the appropriate Sections of that Act should be consulted before action is taken.

Under the London Government Act, 1939, it is possible to petition the Secretary of State, and for him to act, but no provision is made for this procedure in the Local Government Act, 1933. Sections of this Act, covering the procedure in respect of county councils, borough councils, urban and rural district councils, and parish councils, can be obtained on application to the National Agent's Department, Transport House.

EDITOR.

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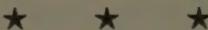
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IT is time that the Labour movement faced up to its responsibilities in connection with the agency service. The political future of the whole movement is linked with our ability to organise resources and public opinion so effectively that permanent political power is assured to the Party's parliamentary and local government candidates. This in turn rests upon our success in building a machine, which will ensure that every potential Labour supporter can be polled, as well as the development of effective propagandist and membership recruitment work in all local areas between electoral contests.



In this respect we are falling behind. Our approach is the wrong one. The sheer weight of economic pressures, rising costs, salaries, is operating against expansion of the Party's organising service in the constituencies and is now steadily forcing a recession rather than an advance, at a time when the movement's political future is at stake. The facts are that the Conservative Party machinery is improving and developing new techniques and services which we, in present circumstances, cannot effectively counter. With parliamentary majorities decided by a small number of almost evenly balanced constituencies, political success is becoming more and more a matter of the relative efficiency of the two machines.

It is obvious, if permanent political power is to be won for Labour, that able organisers should be placed in the marginal and near marginal constituencies, with a command of resources which would enable them to speedily develop and consolidate the Labour vote. But as things are, the more experienced and better equipped men tend to gravitate to the higher paid and more secure posts, where often the duties are largely administrative. It would obviously be desirable for the older men with a lifetime of service and skill in negotiation and in handling the human material with which an agent works to be transferred, or promoted, to those areas where agency has become, over the years, largely an administrative function, with policy making and the normal

# WE MUST More Power

**Leslie Hilliard, General Secretary of the Labour Party, writes for a new approach to the agency service. The decline in the number of agents, the cost of employing and paying for them, and the issues raised are discussed in this article.**

processes of local government the prime concern. With them, need to be placed the 'trainees', the young men and women who need experience before being called upon to accept agency responsibility.

And we should see that, all things being equal, new appointments are made from 'trainees' who have satisfactorily completed their probationary training, rather than to 'take on trust' applicants who may, or may not, be suitable for the work and who, in any case, are going to get experience only after appointment and often at the expense of the employing body.

It is plain too that linked with every agency appointment must be the provision of the basic equipment necessary to an agent if he is to perform his duties satisfactorily. 'Give us the tools and we'll do the job' was a well-known wartime slogan. For a business organisation to employ an operative and leave him without machinery would be unthinkable madness. Yet some agents have been expected to work from their homes, often without a typewriter, duplicator, or the simplest of filing systems.

Last year's Annual Report showed that 22 agencies had collapsed. More have gone, or reverted to some form of part-time arrangement, since. Agents are functioning in only a limited number of constituencies and of these very much less than 50 per cent are reasonably secure in that they have trade union or co-operative backing, or long term development has built up adequate local resources. In many cases clerical assistance is vitally necessary, but cannot be provided. In others

# HAVE Agents

Agents' Union, here appeals to the Party's Agency Service. Agents since the General question of the best way of professional agents. The Editorial.

transport is the key to effective organisation, but is beyond local resources.

Grading of appointments has been established and has been a means of providing a channel for promotion based upon acceptance of, and suitability for, added responsibility, but this again is prejudiced by ability to pay and the difficulty of ensuring that an able man is appointed.

Without 'Grants-in-Aid', 'Special Grants' and other expedients many agencies could not continue, or even have been established. If these payments were withdrawn, collapse would be inevitable. And these conditions prevail almost precisely in those marginal and near marginal divisions where electoral success is vital.

The solution is obvious. What the movement needs is a fully integrated, national agency service, as a complement to the regional organising machinery. Such a service would provide for a satisfactory method of recruitment, ensure adequate facilities for training and specialisation based upon the party's needs, rather than upon purely local consideration.

Until such a national scheme operates it will be impossible to ensure that the services of the existing agency staff are used to the full in the interests of the whole movement, and justice will not be done to the party's employees.

The Agent's Union has seen the need for many years and has consistently urged this point of view upon the movement. Now the problem is pressing. The Preston

resolution in 1941, the Rossendale resolution in 1952, and many others have stressed the need for action. The National Executive Committee has the task of "preparing a budget shewing the minimum income it needs annually to adequately finance the Party nationally and to include in the budget funds whereby a full-time agent can be employed in every constituency or at least 400 winnable seats, such employment to be financed from national funds. The budget to be presented to the next annual conference and to show how the minimum income is to be raised."

The National Union of Labour Organisers and Election Agents adopted a memorandum which outlined a series of practical steps which could be taken now. They have been before the Adjustments Board since January. The Union proposes that the Labour Party should undertake to meet half the cost of an Agent's salary in all those constituencies where no sponsoring organisation exists. A measure of security would be provided the agents in the unsponsored constituencies and relief would be given to hard-pressed parties where an agent is already employed. Money thus released could be devoted to propaganda and membership activity.



The union appreciates that even these modest proposals may, at this moment, be beyond the party's resources. We suggest, therefore, that since the problem is pressing the National Executive should limit the finding of 50 per cent of an agent's salary to the 150 to 200 marginal, and near marginal, constituencies, and to such other cases as the National Agent feels it to be desirable, provided it is understood that, as opportunity existed, there would be a steady extension of the number of agencies served and detailed consideration should go on in connection with the eventual pooling of all financial resources along the lines proposed in the terms of the Preston resolution, so that in time, a national agency service could come into being.

The sum involved, if this limited approach were adopted, would not be large. About £40,000, approximately 25 per cent of the party's income from affiliation fees at the present time. Some method must be found to raise the additional money, an increase in affiliation fees of 3d. would produce some £65,000, more than adequate for this purpose. Perhaps this might be the method to adopt.

# THOSE ALPHABETICAL REGISTERS

by J. Sterling

THE rural agent is haunted by the unyielding alphabetical register: how to devise a canvass and polling day system where the register is not in street order, that is the problem.

Single canvass cards, i.e. one per elector, are now widely used. The cards are written up from the register, and then sorted into walking order for canvassing. If left in walking order on polling day, it will be impracticable to extract those which have polled, as the register numbers would be hopelessly muddled. It is usual, therefore, to sort the cards back into register order, placing those of supporters into a separate box or tray.

As numbers of those who have voted are reported, the cards are extracted, and those that remain in the 'For' box are the unpolled promises. It will, however, be impossible, or at least extremely slow to 'knock up' from these cards, which are not in walking order.

We have devised a system (and have used it with success), which entirely overcomes this difficulty. The following are its essential points:

1. Single cards are written up as usual, sorted into walking order, and divided into batches according to the layout of the village.
2. The canvass takes place and the results are recorded on the cards. It may be found that a few cards are not quite accurately sorted, and the

necessary adjustments are made during the canvass. Thus by the end of the canvass the cards will be accurately sorted into walking order (w.o.).

3. Just before polling day the single cards, still in walking order, are consecutively numbered (so that each card bears the register no. and a w.o. no.).
4. Promise cards are now written up (one or more cards for each batch of single cards) by recording details of supporters including w.o. no.
5. The single cards are now sorted into register order. As on polling day, numbers of those who have voted become available, the single cards are easily extracted, and in the case of supporters, the w.o. no. is noted, and without difficulty traced on the promise cards, where the name of the elector is deleted.
6. By 'knocking up' time the promise cards are up-to-date and ready for their function of showing unpolled supporters in walking order.

After the election, the single cards can easily be sorted into walking order again (by reference to their w.o. no.) for membership canvass, etc.

In fact, this dual number system provides invaluable liaison between the alphabetical register and the realities of the geographical situation.

## Getting High Local Polls

IN the Barnet Constituency we are proud of the percentage polls we achieve in local elections. In the last three years we have had an *over-all* average of more than 50 per cent and several wards consistently poll around 70 per cent. This year, our highest was 73 per cent and our lowest 41 per cent, with ten wards polling over 50 per cent.

There is no simple recipe to produce high percentage polls in local elections.

They result from keen organisation on BOTH sides, with our Party setting the pace and the Tories accepting the challenge.

This upward trend in polling can be traced back to nearly five years ago, when we agreed to regard all local elections as 'try-outs' for the Parliamentary fight. Apart from large numbers of meetings, our campaigns have been fought with enthusiasm almost equal to that created in General Election.

We, firstly, trained a number of members to undertake Committee Room responsi-

bility in their own wards and, in the main, these members have now performed their duties through two General Elections and four or five local campaigns. They know their area and its peculiarities, and they know their workers. Records have been built up of canvassers, car-owners, deliverers, clerical helpers and persons who will undertake gate duty, and these members now expect to be called upon at election times to do their respective jobs.

Each constituency has its own problems and must adapt its organisation to meet them. In Barnet, we have a number of areas where Labour support is negligible. Early each year, therefore, we decide in which wards we will wage active fights and where 'token' contests will be undertaken. These 'token' fights, employing the minimum of personnel and propaganda, keep the Tory workers and cars fully engaged and prevent them 'switching' to our more vulnerable spots.

We decide, too, the nature of our own campaigns. In some wards, we know that we can only win if we achieve a high percentage poll. Elsewhere, we could only hope to win on a low poll. This factor determines how noisy, or quiet, will be our campaign.

And on polling day itself, we have tried to evolve the best possible system to get supporters to the poll. After much experimenting, we adapted a canvass system common to the whole Division: one which is simple and requires the minimum of clerical work. Through this, we now have an effective checking system in operation on Polling Day and there is much rivalry as to which ward can most accurately assess the final result of the Counts.

In a county division, polling day organisation must vary with the nature of the district: a street steward system operating in an urban district wouldn't be possible in the villages. But, basically, we have found it advantageous to utilise an early morning 'knock-up' which is designed (a) to remind supporters that it is polling day; (b) to find out at what time they intend to vote, and to mark the card accordingly; and (c) to accept definite bookings for conveyance by car. These bookings are reported back to the Committee Rooms and the cars are then put to definite use instead of tagging behind the 'knockers-up' waiting for passengers.

Add to all this, our insistence on good candidates, well-produced literature, and a constant endeavour to improve polling facilities, and you have a simple expla-

nation of how we try to achieve high percentage polls in local elections.

The fact that the poll in a village with 1,600 voters has exceeded 70 per cent in the past three annual elections, and an urban area, with 5,000 voters has exceeded 65 per cent on three successive occasions does indicate that in Barnet the electoral machines of both Parties are well matched.

Proof of this 'matching' is obtained from the fact that in the 1950 General Election the Barnet Tory candidate had the highest expenditure in the country, with the Barnet Labour candidate a close second. And in the 1951 Election, the Barnet Labour candidate was top, with the Barnet Tory candidate second.

The recipe? Apathy in local elections can only be overcome by good organisation on both sides. And good organisation results from the enthusiasm that every Party officer and agent must help to create.

## ARTHUR CLARE

FOOTNOTE: At the last General Election in Barnet the Conservatives had a majority of 13,152! \*

## COST OF APPEALS

WITH reference to the alleged breaches of R.P.A. in the July issue of the *Labour Organiser* it would greatly assist Agents if you could give some indication of the cost of these appeals—whether, i.e. no matter, if the appellants win or lose their case.

Agents are always at great pains to secure appreciation by election workers of just what it means in £ s. d. to the party and to individuals, when election law is treated lightly. I have a feeling that we are not always believed when we give this warning. Definite facts and figures quoted about the numerous cases in the National Agent's files would greatly assist us in obtaining proper respect for the law, especially among those over-enthusiastic ones who suggest we are exaggerating when we say some things must be done and other things must not be done.

H. T. WILLCOCK

\*See page 147

## **Around the Regions**

# **S.W. EXAMINES POLICY**

THE N.E.C. Policy Document has been issued, and in order that the amendments, deletions and additions to be decided upon at the Annual Conference do represent the desires of the rank-and-file, parties are urged to give the document close consideration. In addition, a number of conferences are being held, at which members of the National Executive Committee will explain the document.

The first of these conferences in this region was held on 5th July, when credentials were issued to 550 delegates in the two counties of Gloucester and Somerset. This was a good delegation for a Sunday afternoon and confined to only two counties. Morgan Phillips, who spoke for an hour, received the well-deserved applause and congratulations of the delegates.

Further conferences are being held at Salisbury for Wiltshire and Dorset, and at Plymouth for Devon and Cornwall, but my point in writing this is to warn parties not to build up a prejudice against the document before they have had an opportunity of reading and discussing it at either constituency, or regional conferences.

In some constituencies where they have a news letter the document has been condemned because maybe the editor, or contributor to the news letter, himself has formed a critical opinion. This method of attempting to persuade delegates that the document is not good, is bad for democracy and is not using the news letter for the purpose for which it was introduced.

It is to be hoped, therefore, that delegates will read the document with care and, before attempting to put an opinion into writing for general consumption, will listen to the explanation of the proposals, and then if they so wish, make critical, but constructive contributions, with a view to improving the final draft.

During recent years many Constituency Labour Parties found themselves for the first time in the position of employers of full-time agents. I have discovered, in some cases, that the party does not always recognise its legal and moral responsibilities as an employer, and that by its failure very often serious trouble develops.

For some time now, we have been advising our parties that where a full-time Agent is employed, a separate Wage Account at the Bank should be opened and that from time to time, this account should be fed by regular transfers from the General Fund. The account should carry, as far as possible, a reserve of at least three months' wages. One officer of the party, not necessarily the Treasurer, should be in charge of the account and be responsible for reporting at regular intervals to the constituency Executive Committee the position of the account.

From this account such items as wages, national insurance, superannuation, P.A.Y.E. and travelling expenses should be drawn. It is the responsibility of the employer to deduct from the wages at source, the P.A.Y.E., Superannuation and Insurances and to see that the Insurance Card is stamped regularly, and to remit the P.A.Y.E. and superannuation payments to the appropriate Authorities.

The above is the correct and business-like way of attending to an employer's liability and responsibility, and if there are parties who are not operating this method, they would be well-advised to give the matter their urgent consideration.

E. V. REED

South Western

## **Summer Schools**

SINCE its inception in 1938 the Lancashire and Cheshire Regional Council has been organising week-end and full week's schools, the response to which has varied from year to year. 1953 showed greater interest in the schools than for many years and for the week-end June 20th/21st, many bookings were refused. Mr. Harry Hynd, M.P., was the lecturer and 51 students heard lectures on 'The Trade Unions in Nationalised Industries' and 'The International Prospect'. With students from many Trade Unions for the first and the usual experts (!) for the second, questions and discussions were lively, interesting and generally on a high level.

Our full week's school July 11th-18th is fully booked up with students from

many walks of life. Miners, dockers, shop-workers, housewives, will be joining with students from a number of the professions in listening to and discussing with a formidable array of lecturers including Charles Royle, M.P., Desmond Donnelly, M.P., James McColl, M.P., and Frank Machin (Northern Editor of the *Daily Herald*).

In September two further week-end schools will be held when the lecturers will be Mr. Fred Lee, M.P., and Mr. Will Nally, M.P.

Already for 1954 the Regional Council is being pressed to extend its schools and the matter will be before an early meeting of a Regional Sub-Committee when plans for the coming year will be worked out.

R. C. WALLIS

North Western

## Co-op. Shop

IT all started at the Co-op shop on a bitterly cold May evening in 1919. Thirteen people shivered round a smoky stove in a grubby room. Arthur Goodfellow was there, and so was his wife Florence. That night a Labour Party was born and Arthur was elected Chairman. That night Arthur had it placed on record that *in his opinion the Labour Party had come to stay*.

Several weeks later Florence became Chairman of Dover's first Labour Women's Section. The following November, Labour won its first three seats on the Dover Town Council.

Until 1940 the story of the Party at Dover was just like the story of your local Party. Then the town became Britain's front line outpost.

When I first visited Dover, it was like a city besieged; the population had fallen from 41,000 to under 17,000. Less than four per cent of its houses remained undamaged. Across the Straits were the massive Nazi fortifications.

More than three thousand times the sirens wailed the alert. Nearly a thousand H.E. bombs fell on this little port. Two thousand five hundred shells from Nazi long-range guns brought death or injury to its citizens. Guns belched and boomed from under English hillsides, whilst, in the Channel, German seamen cursed this 'bloody hell-fire corner'.

Life went on—Labour Party members met in shell-shattered homes to conduct the affairs of the Movement. Thousands of folk slept in caves and tunnels within

the white cliffs. Some shelters had been fashioned by smugglers of more romantic days, others had been designed for use in wars now long forgotten, some were new, all were adapted to house a total of 9,930 people.

By 1942 Party membership for the Dover constituency had fallen to 120, and by 1943 Hell Fire Corner was too hot for its residents to worry much about Labour membership figures, but Party meetings continued until the war in Europe ended.

Came 1945 and Dover returned J. R. Thomas as its first Labour Member of Parliament. Then to work, to rebuild homes, and to rebuild the Constituency Labour Party. By December, 1952, the Party at Hell Fire Corner had 4,090 members.

The other day I again met Arthur and Florence Goodfellow at the little Co-op shop. Florence still has a merry twinkle in her eye, she works and lives for the Party. At 74 years, Arthur is Chairman of the Constituency Party.

Hell Fire Corner now has twenty local Labour Parties, and expects more than 5,000 Individual Members before next Christmas. In Arthur Goodfellow's opinion "*the Labour Party at Dover has come to stay*."

Southern

F. SHEPHERD

## 35,000 Pay

CHRISTCHURCH PARK, Ipswich, is the loveliest park in East Anglia. Its 67 acres of undulating and wooded beauty dates from the twelfth century and it is believed to be more enchanting now than at any time in its long and famous history.

Formerly this vast expanse belonged to the Black Canons of Holy Trinity Priory, but under the Dissolution Henry VIII turned it into a royal domain. Now it belongs to the people.

It is the scene every year of the Co-operative and Labour Movement's gigantic Fête and Demonstration, which takes place on the first Saturday in July.

All the afternoon and evening people absolutely pour into the park from all parts of Suffolk, and this year 35,000 (thirty-five thousand) paid for admission.

It is an unusually attractive Fête for there is literally something for everybody. This year the programme included A.A.A. sports, an all-England dog show, inter-county boxing, singing competitions, gymnastics, Punch and Judy for young and

old, fun-fair and grand variety, and at the end there was a fantastic firework display.

For the politically interested there is the Demonstration, and what a Demonstration! Always about 10,000 sit around at various vantage points to hear the speakers and this time they were Hugh Gaitskell, Norman Dodds and Dick Stokes.

It is worth travelling many miles to witness this event which surely is one of the largest demonstrations in Great Britain.

Of course the Fête is a tremendously successful advertising event for the Co-operative Movement in all its phases, but it is also an event of tremendous importance to the Labour Movement, for not only do friends and comrades meet again but the constituency parties in the county benefit to the tune of about £100 apiece.

The Joint Committee and its Secretary do their job enthusiastically and efficiently and they are to be congratulated on the unique success which they achieve every year.

Eastern

W. T. YOUNG

## Musical Meeting

THE present period is remarkable for the lack of interest and enthusiasm by the electorate in public meetings and rallies. Only those speakers in the very top flight are able to fill the halls, which are traditionally the scene of large and enthusiastic gatherings.

In Yorkshire, the annual event of the Labour Women's Rally has just taken place. The interest taken in it by the whole membership of the party has been fully maintained in spite of the prevailing depression. Why is this? It is true that the two speakers were an attraction in themselves, but that does not appear to be the complete answer.

One aspect of the rally, which distinguishes it from other rallies and meetings, is the use of music as special items in the programme which enables the audience to participate.

The natural talents of many of our women's section members are harnessed many weeks in advance of the date. After the choice of songs has been made, all of them well known, those members of each section who have experience of choral work are encouraged to rehearse within their section until the great day. On the day itself the singers gather together in the hall for their first, and final, rehearsal

as a complete choir. The result is an astounding and delightful leavening of the proceedings.

The next step is to obtain an adequate supply of community song sheets. The *Daily Herald* sheet can be obtained from the Party's Bookshop very cheaply, and it ensures that the audience is given every opportunity of taking part.

If there is a good organ available to lead the singing so much the better and better still, if you have the right person to act as conductor and leader.

In Yorkshire we are fortunate in having all these things and they do provide one means of holding a successful rally, the memory of which lingers long.

J. ANSON

North Eastern

## UNION MEETS

THE meeting of the South Wales and South West District of the Agents' Union on the 18th June, was both a useful and interesting one. The General Secretary's news letter was thoroughly discussed. The district is unanimous in its support of the suggestion that the superannuation payment should be amended to 1/60th of the average salary over the last five years prior to retirement.

We are most concerned that some agents are not being paid their correct increments, and feel that every effort should be made to put such circumstances on a proper footing. An interesting discussion took place on the suggestion that people employed by parties as full-time finance officers, collectors, etc., should not be catered for by the Agents' Union. We feel that the Union should cater solely for men and women engaged in our profession. Many agents are running their own cars at a considerable loss and it is hoped that a satisfactory arrangement will be reached in the very near future.

The district has made arrangements to hold a special dinner during Conference week. This will be organised by Ken Forbes, and will be held on September 29th, at the Greylands Hotel, Cliftonville, the guests of honour being the Rt. Hon. Aneurin Bevan, M.P., Miss Jenny Lee, M.P., and Mr. A. L. Williams, National Agent. The Chairman and General Secretary of the Agents' Union have also been invited. If any members feel they would like to attend they can obtain information from the district secretaries of the Union.

KEN FORBES.

# Leave Fors, Agaists, Newcomers

By ARTHUR JOHNSON

IT is estimated that every issue of the Register shows a change in the electorate of between 10 and 20 per cent, which means that the political affiliations of newly-qualified electors are unknown. To obtain information about these electors is a big job, but is a job that can be made very much easier by the adoption of such methods as are suggested here.

The preparation of canvass material and envelopes are two jobs that can be started immediately, the marked register being used in this work. When the canvass material is ready, mark off known supporters and opponents and include with the instructions to canvassers a note that those so marked should not be canvassed. Concentrate your canvass, in the first stage, on those not marked, i.e. the newly qualified electors, the 'outs' and 'doubtfuls' of previous elections. In this way the number of electors to be visited will be considerably reduced, thus helping to achieve what every agent hopes for, a maximum knowledge of his electorate.

## NOT IGNORED

Known supporters should not be completely ignored however. Ask your candidate to prepare a letter, addressed to them. In his letter he should say that because of the number of electors in the constituency it is not possible to call personally on all, and asking for their continued support for the Party.

When addressing the envelopes, place a distinguishing mark on those addressed to supporters in the top right hand corner, and insert one of the special letters in each together with other election material. It may well be that some agents do not use envelopes for their election communications and in these cases it would be worth addressing a special set of envelopes to known supporters for this purpose.

It may be, of course, that sufficient workers are available to undertake a

canvass on supporters. If so, then they should be visited in a second canvass.

If these preparations are put in hand now, using the marked register, the chances of victory in many constituencies will be brought much nearer.

## MONEY FROM DEBATES

HAVE you ever tried to make money for the Party out of a political debate without charging for admission, without running a raffle, and without taking a collection?

Gunnersbury Ward, Brentford and Chiswick Labour Party, tried it recently and liked it. Ward funds made a net profit of a guinea, from an audience of only 22 people, by the simple expedient of selling them ballot papers on which to record their votes. No ballot paper, no vote.

The debaters, a team of four, all local talent from a speakers' class, argued theorny question of an elected President versus Royalty.

After they had had their first innings the audience was invited to have a go. Just before the debaters were called to give their final speeches, 126 ballot papers—the zenith of the treasurer's optimism—were all snapped up in less than five minutes at twopence each. Apart from that, voting was free.

Ardent republicans could buy as many ballot papers and vote as often as they liked. Royalists could do the same. Doubtful voters were in heaven. They could and did cast votes for either side.

When the last speaker had finished ballot papers were marked 'Yes' or 'No' and passed to the chairman. The count took place in full view of the audience with the 'No' debaters acting as scrutineers for the 'Aye' votes and vice versa.

Final result was in favour of an elected President by 65 votes to 61. The narrow margin maintained the excitement of the audience to the end. And the net profit was, as we have said, one guinea!

J. KENWOOD

## NEW CANDIDATES AND AGENTS

Candidates

THE following were endorsed as Prospective Parliamentary Candidates at the June meeting of the National Executive Committee:

Stockport South	Mr. H. Davies
Derbyshire West	Mr. G. L. Williams
Dorset West	Lt.-Col. C. J. Kane
Basingstoke	Mr. W. Royle
New Forest	Mr. H. J. Barnes
Portsmouth	
Langstone	Mr. F. E. Baker
Tonbridge	Mr. R. L. Fagg
Morecambe &	
Lonsdale	Mr. W. Fielding
Preston North	Mr. E. Hewitt
Ruislip-Northwood	Mr. G. S. Burden
Chichester	Mr. M. Jones
Lewes	Mr. J. L. Eley
Barkston Ash	Mr. H. V. Wiseman
Thirsk & Malton	Mr. G. R. Mitton
Lanark	Mr. J. MacKie
Edinburgh North	Mr. E. G. Willis
Edinburgh West	Mr. J. A. Thomson

Co-operative Candidate running in association with the Labour Party

Hertford	Mr. W. S. Hilton
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## Withdrawal of Candidatures

Reading North	Mr. R. W. Mackay
North Cornwall	Mr. J. Baines
Tavistock	Mr. F. W. Harcourt-Munning
Ormskirk	Mr. J. A. Walsh
South Norfolk	Mr. L. Scutts
Twickenham	Mrs. M. L. Bramall
Chertsey	Mr. D. S. F. Warth

Agents

THE following Agency appointments have been approved by the National Executive Committee:

**MISS ALISON BRIERLEY.** Macclesfield has appointed Miss A. Brierley as Secretary-Agent. Age 26, Alison Brierley has been active in Knutsford constituency for

the past few years, and was local candidate and agent in the 1951 and 1952 Local Government elections.

**CLIFFORD COOPER** to Ashford. Age 31, formerly a millwright, an active trade unionist and Party worker, Clifford Cooper acted as election agent in the 1950 General Election and at the Dartford council elections since 1949. He takes up his new duties on the 1st August.

**DAVID MAURICE** has been appointed by the St. Marylebone constituency as Secretary-Agent. A ship's clerk, age 33, David Maurice has held many offices in the Streatham party, and acted as election agent at the 1950 General Election.

**CHARLES COPPER.** Southall has selected Charles Copper to fill the agency vacancy there. For the past four years he has been Secretary-Agent to the Wandsworth Central Party.

**ERNEST PLATT.** Burton-on-Trent has appointed Ernest Platt as its Secretary-Agent. For the past two years he has been Agent to the Blackpool Borough Labour Party and was formerly, for five years, part-time agent at Rushcliffe.

**MRS. CONSTANT KIRKBY** has been appointed by the Wandsworth Streatham constituency as Secretary-Agent. Mrs. Kirkby has held many offices at local party level, and commenced her duties as Party Agent in June.

**QUOTE L99777**

THE Labour Party now has a Co-operative Society Trading Number. By occasionally quoting L99777 when purchasing 'at Co-ops' in the national membership scheme, individual members and affiliated organisations can help the Party's national funds.

# We Can Reap a Green Harvest

AFTER listening to much heated disputation in many places on the comparative value of the spoken and written word for propaganda purposes my conclusion goes in favour of both. But whether you talk or write your propaganda it goes for nothing unless you get the object of it to listen or to read as the case may be.

It is necessary to devote infinite time and care to the preparation of policy documents such as *Challenge to Britain*, but Jimmy Green, our problem child, will not read it. It is unlikely anyone will even sell him a copy of the bovrilized version, *Labour's Plan for Britain*.

SEVERAL times a year political broadcasts are made by various Party leaders, and very good they are, or anyhow some of them. Alas, they don't reach Jimmy Green, for if he is in the house at all he is tuned in to the Light Programme or Radio Luxembourg.

You may go to the trouble and expense of hiring a hall or a schoolroom, bringing down a popular M.P., advertising thoroughly, but Jimmy will not be in your audience. He has far more interest in other things. If he happens to walk past an open-air meeting he may possibly pull up and listen for a while. But only a week or two ago a young and dogmatic Labour M.P. assured us in the *Daily Herald* that the open-air meeting is outmoded and the soap-box an obsolete tool. It is true that he condescendingly exempted the South West and other prairie lands from this general condemnation, but it cannot be shown that these territories are the only habitat of the mighty Green family. The Greens flourish everywhere in this green and pleasant land.

It thus appears that it is far from easy to "get at" this exasperating neighbour of ours by either the spoken or the written word. But until we succeed in doing so, the life of every Labour Government will be precarious and we shall be plagued with a good many Tory Governments yet.

Have we yet done everything possible either in speech or on paper? All of us

cannot produce literature which the Greens may or may not read. Everyone of us can talk to Jimmy, his wife Olive, his youngsters, every day of our lives. We shall not get far unless we discern Jimmy for the decent, lively, intelligent fellow he is, but recognise clearly that he is not naturally a political animal or at any rate not a grown-up one. It is useless to hit him with masses of facts and figures, especially figures. It is worse than useless to tell him he is a down-trodden, frustrated, poverty-stricken wage-slave. Leave that caricature of his situation as a workman and a citizen to the Communist Party, who in thirty years have succeeded in attracting only a few of the sappiest of the Greens.

Deep down somewhere in our friend, lying latent, is a vein of social seriousness, a genuine sense of right and wrong, of good and evil. He knows nothing and cares less of the Theory of Surplus Value and if you talk to him of dialectical materialism he thinks you are barmy, and maybe he is right in that. But he is capable of anger and sorrow. You may impatiently say his head is soft, but it is certain that his heart is soft if touched properly. When we fail to interest him in an elaborate political and economic case we can rouse his emotions and so infect him with socialist ethics and idealism.

AS to written matter, Party Headquarters turn out a mass of the most valuable and essential political material which Jimmy never sees and probably wouldn't read if he did. Perhaps there is not enough in either leaflet or pamphlet form specially designed for him. More of it, taken to him by an eager Party machine, might pay high dividends. Above all, is there not somewhere a gifted Party member who will write a Twentieth Century "Merrie England" related to to-day as Blatchford's great book was to sixty years ago, from which Jimmy Green will be transformed into a conscious socialist as John Smith was so long ago?

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